

Church space in Byzantium

The church is a space created in order to house public worship. Christians start constructing such buildings since as early as the 3rd century in order to facilitate their communication with God by praying in a place created to serve this exact purpose,¹ as worship in Orthodox religion is a practice that involves the gathering of the members of the Church in a public building reserved for this purpose.

Being a social space in this sense, as Lefebvre would argue, the church building is a social product.² This term however, does not refer to a collective product, created through a type of collective, anonymous productive procedure, but rather to a product created by certain individuals in order for it to be used, lived, and consumed by a community.

In spatial terms, the church houses public worship by serving as the space for the performance of the holy mysteries. However, the importance of such space for its users should probably not be measured only in spatial terms; in social terms, the church building is a symbol for its users, it is a building on which the collective and the individual subject is projected. The church is a building that plays a very important role in the life of a community, as, mostly through its function, it becomes a centre of social life. As Lefebvre puts it, 'social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act'.³ The church building, as social space, should not be conceived without taking into consideration its users, the members of the Church for whom the building is created, and their lives, which 'pass' through this building, as it stages, marks and gives meaning to social relationships and strengthens the feel of community between its users.

The participation of the faithful in the life of the Church, which is housed inside the church building, has both individual and social dimensions. As Hayes points out, even though Christians regarded themselves as being God's temples, the nature of their religion led them to construct churches in order to house and facilitate public

¹ Dawn Marie Hayes, *Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100-1389* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 16.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 26.

³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 33.

worship.⁴ Indeed, Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians comments on the faithful's attribute of being God's temples: 'Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred and you together are that temple.'⁵ Paul's statement and the construction of churches should not be interpreted as two mutually exclusive realities. It can be argued that Paul refers mostly to the responsibility of the faithful to protect themselves and treat their bodies wisely and that he does not overemphasize on the personal aspect of devotion or on the lack of need for public worship. In this sense, the fact that Christians built churches while regarding themselves as being God's temples is not a paradox. In fact, in order for Christians to become God's temples, a specific place has to exist, inside which the faithful, through their participation in the holy mysteries, will become God's temples. Without the execution of the holy mysteries and their participation in them, the faithful cannot consider themselves God's temples and for this reason public worship becomes a practice of crucial significance.

Christians proved their need for assembly and public worship since the very early days of the Church, when they used to gather in privately owned spaces.⁶ This eager need for the existence of a specifically dedicated to devotion space might serve as proof for the concept that the church space is not regarded only as a space that houses events and serves religious needs, as Ousterhout underlines;⁷ its function is clearly not limited to operational needs. Space creates a sense of community and serves as a screen on which both the individual and the collective subject are projected and reflected. Therein ideology is produced, circulated, appropriated and reproduced, in Bourdieu's terminology.⁸ Church space thus has the ability to function as a medium for, as a communicator and as a co-producer of ideology at the same time, a crucial process that 'feeds' both space and ideology. As Lefebvre would argue, there can be no space free of ideological implications and no ideology without

⁴ Hayes, *Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100-1389*, p. 9.

⁵ Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

⁶ Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 2.

⁷ Robert Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy', in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. by Linda Safran (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998) (p. 81).

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory*, 7.1 (1989), 14-25.

spatial references; 'ideologies are in space and of it', in his own words.⁹

The important role of the church in social life can also be described in temporal terms. Indeed, participation in the life of the Church offers the community the opportunity to experience time through space. On the one hand, in a personal level, the faithful's life is marked by their participation in the holy mysteries; baptism, marriage, death, while signifying a passing from one stage to another, they are experienced inside the church and they are closely related to that particular space. In this way, the degree of correlation between space and time in respect to one's life, as experienced through his/hers contact with the Church, is very high.

On the other hand, in a collective level, great feasts, such as Christmas, the Resurrection and the Dormition of Virgin Mary, mark for the community the passing from one season to another and relate intimately to the activities of the people during each season. In this way, the Church and everything that takes place in the church space seem to contribute to the temporal structure of the life of the community, both in micro and in macro level, and make the church building one of the social centers of the life of its users by symbolizing and, most importantly, by being closely related to the realization of a type of space/time unity.

In sum, the church space could be thus characterized as a centre of social life, a complex symbol for the public that serves, like every symbol, in Bourdieu's opinion, as an 'instrument par excellence of social integration... of knowledge and communication'.¹⁰ The function of the church as a space-symbol can be described through a concept based on dualities, as pairs of probably contradictory qualities of this space. Indeed, the importance of the church space in social life is high as, in pragmatic terms, this space can be identified as a core element of the life of the community and at the same time, in symbolic terms, the same space acts as a nexus, framing social life in its entity by symbolizing a type of space/time unity. Both an element and a frame of social life, this space-symbol can be better understood in Lefebvre's terms as both a product and a means of production.¹¹ Even though a social product, an element of social life, it never loses its ability to exercise a type of symbolic power on its users, as it is at the same time a means of production, a well established frame of social life that participates in the production of ideology and not

⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 210.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', (p. 79).

¹¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 85.

only in its circulation.

Under the same prism, this space-symbol can also be analyzed by using terms such as content and container. Such space, just as any other social space, should not be interpreted as an 'empty medium',¹² a container of social life, a space that just accommodates events and serves operational needs. As Ousterhout suggests, a church building 'may amplify, sanctify, comment upon and interact with the functions it houses'.¹³ Church space, as Ousterhout clearly states, is an interactive stage of events and social relationships, it marks the events that houses and assists in the formulation of the social relationships it stages; in other words it functions both as container and content, realizing an interweave between the two dimensions while none of the two can be perceived as being distinct from the other.

Using contradictory pairs to describe the attributes of this type of space reveals a lot more than an 'apophatic' approach would probably reveal. Understanding this space-symbol through inclusion and exclusion, perfection and imperfection would only lead to the shaping of a distorted image. Under this prism, it would be more appropriate to try to perceive church space as a not perfect space, in the sense that it is not complete, it is a space that needs to be related to its users, its functions, its objects and its symbolisms in order to achieve a degree of balance, in this case a 'relative balance'. For the church space is better understood as being not a single, self-defined, circumscribed 'thing', but as being a *reality* based on and formulated by a 'set of relations' between subjects and objects,¹⁴ a reality that is not complete and that achieves its purpose of existence by flourishing through its interactions with other elements. Church space lies in the realm of becoming and not on that of being.

The question of how church space can be perceived and analyzed is a crucial one and brings forth the need for the study of the relation between form and function. Sullivan's 'form follows function' is indeed a famous statement and has dominated many researchers' views on space and its analysis. In fact, form and function are two major characteristics of space and one should not overlook any of them in order to interpret space. However, as Gombrich points out, the conception that 'the end determines the means' is overemphasized and reveals probably only one part of the

¹² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 87.

¹³ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 81).

¹⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 82.

image.¹⁵ Gombrich suggests that ‘no human action and no human creation is likely to serve only one end; we often find a whole hierarchy of ends and means’.¹⁶ Lefebvre would agree that ‘spaces are over-inscribed’ and cannot be easily defined by using only two simple parameters such as form and function.¹⁷ As Ousterhout underlines, in order to interpret sacred space the researcher needs to apply more parameters, as church space does not serve only functional but also symbolic needs.¹⁸ The analysis of church space should thus be performed in a three-dimensional way, taking into consideration form, function and symbolism, which is necessarily tightly interwoven both with form and function.

However, can space be interpreted without taking into consideration its usage and consequently its user? Often, the usage/user factor is undermined as, just like Ousterhout suggests, ‘human movement is two-dimensional’,¹⁹ and thus probably an element of secondary importance in the process of analyzing a three-dimensional space. However, it can be argued that the user factor is necessarily three-dimensional, as time should be perceived as a core element of human movement. For this reason, in my opinion the role of the user in the interpretation of space should be highly important as space cannot be conceived as not being inhabited; Lefebvre would argue that space is, first of all, created in order to ‘be lived’,²⁰ and if this is a primary purpose of its creation then the people that inhabit it should be considered as playing a major part in its formation, through the way that they move in and relate to space. A comprehensive analysis of sacred space would take into account form, function, symbolism and user; all of them united and interrelated.

Seeking thus a spatial code, a code through which space can be interpreted, should be a multi-dimensional process; besides, Lefebvre would suggest that there is no single spatial code for each space.²¹ In fact, space cannot be perceived as ‘tabula rasa’, a blank slate upon which a message is imprinted.²² ‘Over-inscription’ of

¹⁵ E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images : Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication* (London: Phaidon, 1999), p. 14.

¹⁶ Gombrich, *The Uses of Images : Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 142.

¹⁸ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 81).

¹⁹ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 81).

²⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 143.

²¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 143.

²² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 142.

space,²³ in Lefebvre's terms, makes the process of defining spatial codes even more difficult, and inevitably leads to the need of applying many parameters.

However, what is a spatial code? In this context, I would suggest that a spatial code is what makes space make sense, a way of understanding the underlying *logos* of space, of its production, its usage and its reproduction. In the way that a pictorial code helps the viewer realize the reason behind a particular pictorial style,²⁴ a spatial code can be used as a tool to analyze a particular type of space effectively and to understand its *logos*. In this sense, spatial code should not be confused with meaning of space, with the thoughts space might give rise to or with messages that space might contain. Moreover, I cannot claim that every user of a particular space *knows* its spatial code. However, I believe that people who live in a particular space inevitably experience its spatial code probably subconsciously by being familiarized with this space through their bodies and by being able to partake of this space essentially. As Lefebvre would argue, 'a spatial code is not just a means of reading or interpreting space; rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it'.²⁵

Then, is spatial code a type of language that helps one 'read' space? In this question I would probably have to answer yes and no. Whyte suggests that 'if architecture was a language we would probably be able to understand every building in the same way that we understand a text'.²⁶ Even though Whyte's suggestion is reasonable, it can be argued that the comparison he makes is probably a problematic one. A reader can understand the meaning of words and still not be able to grasp the ideas or the spirit of the writer, for there are several degrees of knowledge of language. Moreover, by having a general knowledge of a language, one can distinguish between a scientific text and a work of literature in the same way that they can distinguish between a church and a palace. In this sense, one can distinguish between different forms and functions by applying certain rules based on their knowledge of the code, the language. Without the existence of such code, one would

²³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 142.

²⁴ For example, Kordis and Antonova have both suggested a pictorial code for Byzantine painting. See G. Kordis, *Ανγοτέμπερα* (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2010)., and Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon : Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2010).

²⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 47.

²⁶ William Whyte, 'How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture', *History and Theory*, 45.2 (2006), 153-77 (p. 166).

be completely lost inside a universe of texts/buildings. In other words, a type of code/language has to exist in order for the user to be able to make sense of the world, but the interpretation of space only through semiotic codes is indeed problematic. This suggestion is clearly supported by Lefebvre who argues that if space is perceived as a message and its user as a reader, both space and its user are 'reduced' into plain things and this 'evades both history and practice'.²⁷ In contrast to what Hershberger suggests, semiotic analysis is not adequate to the task of analyzing space,²⁸ as it cannot take into consideration every parameter that defines space, such as 'time, form, atmosphere...color and so on'.²⁹ For this reason, space, that can be better perceived as 'texture' and not as text in Lefebvre's terms,³⁰ should be analyzed by the use of a wider spatial code that cannot be simply characterized as a language.

Spatial code, the way of interpreting space, has been widely associated with *zeitgeist*, the defining spirit of a particular period or culture.³¹ Indeed, it seems paradoxical to perceive space as a reality outside *zeitgeist*. However, *zeitgeist* can probably function as a factor that delimits space and interprets it in a simplistic manner while not taking into serious consideration elements such as individual creativity. Gombrich would agree that Hegel's 'historical collectivism' overemphasizes on the collective spirit and undermines individuality.³² Even though it might seem difficult to perceive the architect, the architecture and the user as being detached from *zeitgeist*, one has to consider that individuality is not lost even inside *zeitgeist*.³³ In other words, *zeitgeist* and individuality should not be conceived as being two mutually exclusive terms and one should not be sacrificed for the sake of the other; for on the one hand, *zeitgeist* is both a social product and a means of production and cannot be perceived per se, without referring to the society and the

²⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 7.

²⁸ Robert Hershberger, 'A Study of Meaning in Architecture', in *Environmental Aesthetics : Theory, Research, and Applications*, ed. by Jack L. Nasar (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) (p. 190).

²⁹ Whyte, 'How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture', (p. 167).

³⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

³¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, by G. W. F. Hegel. trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

³² Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich, *Tributes : Interpreters of Our Cultural Tradition* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1984), p. 52.

³³ Whyte, 'How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture', (p. 168).

individuals that form it and on the other hand individuals inevitably reflect zeitgeist while using tools provided by it in order to create and interpret.

Form and Function

Tracing spatial codes of Byzantine church space has to be a multi-dimensional process that includes parameters such as form, function, symbolism and usage/user. I am going to start by studying issues related to form and function. At this point, I choose to study form and function in a parallel manner in order to primarily examine their interrelation, leaving behind a few often generalizing statements, such as Sullivan's 'form follows function'.³⁴

As Ousterhout suggests, form is very often analyzed through the study of the liturgy and, under this prism, a general relationship between form and function is to be found concerning Byzantine churches.³⁵ Krautheimer would agree that developments in Christian ritual are usually projected in architecture in the sense that liturgy and its needs often play an important role in the formulation of Byzantine architectural style.³⁶ Indeed, the case of the circular domed church, whose use gradually faded, can serve as an example in defense of the above thesis. As Short points out 'circular domed buildings would seem to be ill-fitted for Christian worship...because they offered no natural place for the altar and no natural divisions for keeping the various elements in the congregation apart from each other, and from the officiating priests and the choir'. Church space had to serve liturgical needs the best way possible and for this reason it was always subject to transformations.

In the case of Byzantine church space, even though, generally speaking, form facilitates function, form's relation to function should not be understood as an 'oppressive' one, as there are many factors that affect the formation of the Byzantine architectural style apart from liturgy, such as aesthetics, location requirements and special functions.³⁷ However, one should take into consideration that conceptual

³⁴ Louis Sullivan, 'Form Follows Function', in *America Builds*, ed. by Leland Roth (New York: Harper&Row, 1983).

³⁵ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 81).

³⁶ Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*.

³⁷ Robert Ousterhout, 'An Apologia for Byzantine Architecture', *Gesta*, 35.1 (1996), 21-33 (p. 25).

detachment of form from function would involve risk, as form is a highly communicative element of space and it is directly related to worshippers' experience of space. As Lefebvre argues, space is created primarily to 'be lived'. Consequently, its form is crucial in order for the worshipper to be able to link the building with its function, and most importantly recognize space and thus recognize him/herself in it and find their place in it. Form defines space and consequently its spatial code in a vital way and even though it might not 'denote, describe, recount, depict or portray' anything,³⁸ it still conveys a message; for the form itself is also a message, whether form is considered metaphorically representational or not. As Eco argues, 'we commonly do experience architecture as communication, even while recognizing its functionality'.³⁹ 'Meaning in the environment is inescapable' in Jenks opinion,⁴⁰ and indeed, form cannot be considered as an empty container free of meaning or significance. Because of its communicative function, form is charged with meaning for the user of space, as familiarization with and understanding of form leads to the probably subconscious assimilation of a crucial part of the spatial code, which dominates a particular type of space. In this way, recognition of form as being familiar is highly important, for it initiates a process of familiarization with the spatial code and thus offers 'a way to live', and not just be, in a particular space.

However, even though form is potentially a highly communicative element of space, in order for it to function communicatively it has to constitute an integral part of the spatial code of church space, in other words it has to follow a certain type of architectural structure. Type, *typos* in Greek, is to my opinion a crucial concept in Byzantine culture as it refers directly to the much-valued issue of communication between the so-called pair of subject and object in art and architecture. *Typos* however, should not be confused with style; *typos* seems to be a much deeper concept in Byzantine art and its analysis calls for the employment of categories that are not only aesthetic. *Typos* is a basic architectural form; in spatial terms it could be characterized as means of communication and message at the same time, while its use

³⁸ Nelson Goodman, 'How Buildings Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, 11.4 (1985), 642-53 (p. 642).

³⁹ Umberto Eco, 'Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture', in *Rethinking Architecture : A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. by Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997) (p. 182).

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Broadbent, Richard Bunt, and Charles Jencks, *Signs, Symbols, and Architecture* (Chichester, [Eng.]; New York: Wiley, 1980), p. 7.

could be characterized as a conscious attempt to link art with communication in an integral unity and establish a distinct spatial code.

Typos and the communicative function of form obtained a high degree of importance in Byzantine culture through the centuries and this fact is probably expressed in a manifest way through the creation and widespread reproduction of the cross-in-square plan. During the Middle Byzantine period, the centralized cross-in-square, inscribed cross or quincunx plan becomes the typical Byzantine church plan, even though it was already in use since the 8th century as Mango and Sevckenko suggest.⁴¹ According to Van Millingen this plan is a development from the domed cross plan.⁴²

Krautheimer describes the cross-in-square or quincunx plan as follows: 'Its core, the naos, is small, steep and enclosed in the outline of a square, and composed by nine elements: a tall centre bay, resting on four supports, either columns or piers; a high, well-lit drum of a dome rising as a rule from pendentives; subordinate to it, four short barrel-vaulted cross arms expanding in the main axes; lower, in the diagonal axes, four corner bays, groin-vaulted, barrel-vaulted, or domed. Jointly these corner bays, sometimes surmounted on the exterior by the higher drums of sham domes, and the taller main dome, form the five spots of a quincunx. At the same time, the term cross-in-square is justified by the way in which the arms of the cross issue from the centre bay and meet outer square of the structure. These apses project eastward from the naos. This core is sometimes enveloped by a narthex, by lateral open porticoes, or by closed side chapels'.⁴³

According to Krautheimer, the cross-in-square plan was the typical plan (typical < *typikos* < *typos*) in Byzantium from the 10th until the 15th century. As Ousterhout points out, Byzantine architecture is often characterized by art historians as 'stagnant, dull and repetitive' due to a given 'consistency in church planning', and the widespread use of the cross-in-square plan probably feeds such conceptions.⁴⁴ However, Ousterhout underlines that the typical plan was particularly flexible;⁴⁵ its

⁴¹ Cyril Mango and Ihor Sevckenko, 'Some Churches and Monasteries on the Southern Shore of the Sea of Marmara', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 27 (1973), 235-77.

⁴² Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople*, 15 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), p. 9.

⁴³ Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, p. 245.

⁴⁴ Ousterhout, 'An Apologia for Byzantine Architecture', (p. 22).

⁴⁵ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 97).

variations include the complex four-columned plan, the semi-complex four-columned plan, the simple four-columned plan, the two-columned plan and the octagonal plan.⁴⁶ Thus one can observe that the cross-in-square Byzantine plan, while integrating and following a basic architectural *typos*, obtains many forms as variations of the fundamental form.

The consistency of Byzantine architecture on the typical plan however, calls for a viable explanation. Mango would argue that ‘the chief contribution of Middle Byzantine architecture consisted on the elaboration of a type of church that was, in its own way, perfect’.⁴⁷ From a functional point of view on the one hand, the cross-in-square plan serves the needs of the ritual in an excellent way as it facilitates the execution of the liturgy and the needs of the users of space in the best way possible, primarily due to its layout and size. Demus would add that the typical Byzantine plan ‘does not embody the structural energies of growth, as Gothic architecture does, or those of massive weight, as so often in Romanesque buildings, or yet the idea of perfect equilibrium of forces, like the Greek temple. Byzantine architecture is essentially a “hanging” architecture; its vaults depend from above without any weight of their own. The architectonic conception of a building developing downwards is in complete accord with the hierarchical way of thought manifested in every sphere of Byzantine life, from the political to the religious, as it is to be met with in the hierarchic conception of the series of images descending from the supreme archetype.

⁴⁶ Georgios Prokopiou, *Ο Κοσμολογικός Συμβολισμός Στην Αρχιτεκτονική Του Βυζαντινού Ναου* (Αθήνα: Πυρίνος Κόσμος, 1981), p. 81. Prokopiou suggests that the cross-in-square plan can be divided into four subcategories, based on the connection between the cruciform square and the bema.

1. The complex four-columned plan: The two parts, the bema and the central cruciform square remain intact while the east side of the square osculates the west side of the bema.

2. The semi-complex four-columned plan: The central square is extended and enters the bema and takes up space from the square chambers in front of the niches. The vault that covers the eastern chambers of the central square is extended and covers the side chambers of the bema too.

3. The simple four-columned plan: The central square directly osculates the niches of the bema on the east side, while the chambers of the bema are not present.

4. The two-columned plan: The bema enters the central square and for this reason the two eastern columns and the corresponding chambers are not present as they merge with those in front of the niches of the bema. During the 10th century Prokopiou suggests that a different type of church plan is developed. The octagonal plan is a variation of the cross-in-square church but in this case the dome is supported by eight pilasters peripherally.

⁴⁷ Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 249.

The cross-in-square system of vaults is indeed the ideal receptacle for a hierarchical system of icons. Each single icon receives its fitting place according to its degree of sanctity or importance'.⁴⁸ Thus from a purely aesthetic point of view on the other hand, for Demus the cross-in-square plan is the Byzantine structure par excellence, as it embodies the principles of Byzantine aesthetics in an exceptionally effective way.

Ousterhout suggests that the cross-in-square plan and its variations acquired such an important role in Byzantine architecture mainly because this particular structure and the forms that constitute it are connected to a certain degree of sanctity that, according to him, 'exceeds their structural or functional roles'.⁴⁹ 'The forms were sacred: this was how a church was meant to be', he states.⁵⁰ Adopting Ousterhout's conception of the sanctity of the form is indeed tempting, as it seems to explain effectively the widespread use of the typical plan for more than five centuries. However, the conception of sacred form or structure per se is difficult to find justification in Byzantine sources and can probably lead to misconceptions, such as the possibility of veneration of matter; ascribing sacred properties to material forms goes strikingly against the Orthodox doctrine. After all, architectural forms such as vaults and arches were widely used in profane architecture of the era, too, and suggesting that these exact forms obtain sacred qualities exclusively inside a particular spatial context is in all likelihood problematic. On this matter, I support Hegel's argument through which he proposes that the church does not possess a spiritual element per se but it is through its specified function that church space can be characterized as sacred space. As Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople states 'the church is a heaven on earth, wherein the heavenly God dwells and walks'.⁵¹ Consequently, the individual architectural forms that compose this space even though they might function in a symbolic way, they are not sacred themselves.

The Byzantine passion for reproducing a certain architectural *typos*, with exceptions of course, for more than five centuries, is indeed an intriguing phenomenon. However, the highly important communicative function of *typos* could be probably used as an interpretive tool. Kordis chooses to interpret the Byzantine

⁴⁸ Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration : Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (New York; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997).

⁴⁹ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 97).

⁵⁰ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy' (p. 97).

⁵¹ F. E. Brightman, 'The Historia Mystagogica and Other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy', *Journal of Theological Studies* (1908).

consistency on the use of *typos* in art by applying a dual-end concept, that of the *typos-tropos*.⁵² *Typos*, as I mentioned above, is a basic architectural structure. On the other hand, *tropos* (mode, manner) is the manipulation of *typos* in order to create variations of it, based on functional or aesthetic needs. In this way, as Kordis suggests, Byzantine art manages to create countless variations of a particular *typos*, which even though they follow a certain archetypical form, they are individualized works of art at the same time.⁵³ On the one hand, the maintenance of *typos* is crucial, for this form is established primarily because it is the most functional one, the one that covers all, or at least the majority of the needs for which it is created. It can be claimed that *typos* is a form which probably relates closely to *zeitgeist*, it is the dominating, the most characteristic form of a given era. On the other hand, special needs -functional, location-related, aesthetic- cannot be ignored and so does individual creativity. For this reason, *typos* becomes flexible and offers enough space for the artist to create an original work of art, while maintaining a basic *typos*, through the manipulation of it with the aim of *tropos*. Cultural tradition and individual creativity are thus linked in Byzantium through an inclination to ‘multimodality’.⁵⁴

The concept of multimodality in Byzantine art is introduced by Kordis and it is based mostly on exhaustive study of samples. Apart from observations, multimodality also finds justification in a painter’s manual written by Dionysius of Fournia between 1728 and 1733. Dionysius’ manual is one of the few surviving manuals of Byzantine painting and even though it is written much later after the fall of the Empire, it is considered as a book that describes the principles of Byzantine painting in a very effective way and constitutes a testimony for their survival through the centuries. In his book, Dionysius describes the way in which every saint and every composition has to be created. For example, St Paul is ‘bald, middle-aged and with wavy beard’; St Peter is ‘old with short and curly beard’; St Constantine the Great is ‘young, with young beard and holds a cross and the Bible’. The Annunciation is described as follows: ‘at the background there are houses. Virgin Mary stands in front of a stool and inclines her head a little bit. She holds silk wrapped around a spindle with her left

⁵² George Kordis, *Η Ζωγραφική Ως Τρόπος: Τέσσερα Κείμενα Για Το Χαρακτήρα Της Καθ’ Ημάς Ζωγραφικής* (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2005).

⁵³ Kordis, *Η Ζωγραφική Ως Τρόπος: Τέσσερα Κείμενα Για Το Χαρακτήρα Της Καθ’ Ημάς Ζωγραφικής*

⁵⁴ Kordis, *Η Ζωγραφική Ως Τρόπος: Τέσσερα Κείμενα Για Το Χαρακτήρα Της Καθ’ Ημάς Ζωγραφικής*

hand while she stretches out her right hand to the angel. The angel blesses her with his right hand and with his left hand he holds a spear. Above the houses there is the sky through which the Holy Spirit comes and is directed to the head of the Virgin Mary'.⁵⁵ In this manual, *typos* is described extensively in order for the painter to be able to follow it and create based on it. Through the use of *tropos*, the artist manipulates *typos* and adjusts it to his own requirements; in this way he manages to create an image that has all the qualities of *typos*, as well as its much-valued communicative function, while at the same time it remains an individual work of art. The great importance of *typos* and its maintenance clearly lead to the widespread use of multimodality.

By applying the concept of multimodality in architecture, a new exegesis of the widespread use of the typical Byzantine plan emerges. The architect manipulates the basic architectural *typos* in order for it to be able to serve the specific needs of space. For this reason, he applies various *tropoi* (plural of *tropos*) of management of *typos* and ends up creating a space that even though it possesses all the formal qualities of the archetypical form, such as functionality, facilitation of communication, etc., it still maintains its own character. In this way, the architect manages to create a 'responsive' or 'multimodal' architecture, as Ousterhout and Kordis would suggest respectively.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Dionysios ek Fourni, *Ερμηνεία Της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης* (Άγιον Όρος: Ερμηνεία, 2007).

⁵⁶ Ousterhout, 'An Apologia for Byzantine Architecture', (p. 25)., Kordis, *Η Ζωγραφική Ως Τρόπος: Τέσσερα Κείμενα Για Το Χαρακτήρα Της Καθ' Ημάς Ζωγραφικής*

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